

Pieces of Iowa's Past, published by the Iowa State Capitol Tour Guides weekly during the Legislative Session, features historical facts about Iowa, the Capitol, and the early workings of state government. All italicized text/block quotes in this document are taken directly from historical publications with the actual spelling, punctuation, and grammar retained.



The [River-to-River Road](#) project has been written about extensively. There has even been a [movie](#) made about it: *River to River: Iowa's*



Lafayette Young
Iowa State Senator
United States Senator

Forgotten Highway 6. Most of this 380-mile route, known today as Highway 6, began as a "path" across Iowa. On Saturday morning, June 25, 1910, the path quickly became a highway through the combined efforts of 10,000 farmers, who worked in unison for one hour helping to construct or drag the roadway.



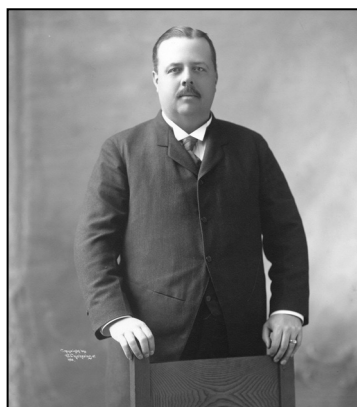
J. W. Eichinger

The owner of the *Des Moines Daily Capital*, Lafayette Young, and the news editor for that newspaper, J. W. Eichinger, enlisted the help of Governor Beryl Carroll, who in turn solicited the help of individuals within each county along the route. With the support

of 10,000 individuals, the highway was built "all to the same standard—and all at the same time."

Glidden Tours

The [Glidden Tours](#) were promotional events held from 1904 to 1913. They were named for Charles Glidden, an automobile financier and early proponent of motoring. The Glidden Tours were sponsored by the American Automobile Association (AAA), which promoted not only public acceptance of automobiles but also safe roadways.



Charles Glidden

Glidden gave the AAA the event's first trophy, which had originally been presented to the winner of the 1905 tour.



Charles Glidden and his wife

Turn-of-the-century horse and carriage lanes were not well suited to automobile traffic. Often participants in these tours encountered roads that were impassable. During tours encompassing several hundred miles, automobiles broke down. Sometimes automobiles damaged property and frightened horses. August Post, chairman of the AAA, organized the Glidden Tours. Post encouraged sponsorship by automobile manufacturers as a means to test the merit of their vehicles.



Left: View of Dai H. Lewis and motorists with Premier pilot car no. 98 on the side of a rural dirt road during the 1908 Glidden Tour. Two men change the rear tire; Lewis pretends to hit one man's backside with a stick. The sign displayed on car reads: "Premier, official 1908 pathfinder, A.A.A. Glidden Tour." Handwritten on the back: "Tours—Glidden Tour, 1908."

Photo courtesy of the [Detroit Public Library](#)

Newspaper Articles

The Register and Leader.

June 26, 1910



Iowa farmers prepared the road for the 1910 Glidden Tour.

Des Moines Tribune

June 28, 1910

GLIDDEN TOURISTS REACH DES MOINES

**Dai Lewis in Pathfinder Arrives in the
City at 2:30—Seven Cars
In at 4 O'clock.**

The Register and Leader and The Evening Tribune press car, a Wescott "40," owned and driven by T. E. Dyson of the T. E. Dyson & Son Automobile company, left this morning at 7 o'clock for Guthrie Center to meet the Glidden tourists. Two members of The Evening Tribune staff with Mr. Dyson composed the party. There are two Wescott machines in the Glidden tour. The press car will meet the tourists at Guthrie Center and accompany them into Des Moines.

Between hundreds of enthusiastic autotists, the Gliddenites this afternoon are whirling down Grand avenue to register in at the Savery. Dai Lewis, the official pathfinder of the tour, with his party, composed of James Ricker, Ralph Rabbittall and Charles Stenhouser, arrived in the city at 2:30, and whizzed down the avenue, amidst the shrieking of auto horns and the shouts of a large crowd of local autotists. At 4:15, seven cars had arrived in the city. They are: No. 1, a Premier; No. 15, a Ruino; No. 103, a Lexington; a Cadillac, number unknown, and No. 4, a Chalmers "30."

In the first car, car No. 1, were R. A. Hamilton, W. White, W. Weigley and Ray McNamara.

BY A STAFF CORRESPONDENT.
GUTHRIE CENTER, Ia., June 28.—Guthrie Center established a record by its reception of the Glidden tourists.

Dai Lewis, official pathfinder, said while eating dinner here, "If the roads to Des Moines are any better than they are to Guthrie Center from Omaha I am afraid we can't stand it."

The cars were packed in a grove just west of Guthrie Center and the whole town flocked to the spot to see them. The pilot car arrived at 11:45 and left at 12:10 for Des Moines. The Register and Leader-Evening Tribune press car, T. E. Dyson's Wescott "40" was pressed into service as the official checker.

W. F. Johnson of the Guthrie Auto club piloted the tourists from the Guthrie county line. Hon. H. S. Selby was pilot from Guthrie Center to Redfield. Dinner was served in the grove by the women of the Methodist church. Dr. E. L. Bower, president of the Guthrie Auto club; T. J. Foster, vice president; Charles Pryor, secretary, and T. C. Harney, treasurer, divided the honor of entertaining the visitors with Hon. W. W. Weeks, president of the River to River Dragged Road association. The Register and Leader-Evening Tribune party were guests of County Attorney Charles Hughes.

The contestants were a long distance behind the pacemaker today because of dust.

Good Roads the Talk.

No accident has occurred on the road today, and the only thing of which the tourists would talk was of the excellency of Iowa's roads.

The tourists could not ask better roads than those over which the Glidden contestants are traveling today. The Register and Leader-Evening Tribune car came to Guthrie Center from Des Moines this morning in less than three hours. The Westcott "40" ran smoothly, climbing the hills on high speed and dashing along on the level at a speed that brought farmers to their gates to cheer the heralds of the Glidden tour. Nearly every farm house is decorated with flags and the farmers have been dragging the roads and filling approaches to the bridges. Guthrie Center is alive with flags bunting and all cars are decorated. The town is enjoying a real holiday in honor of the tourists.

Down Grand avenue the Glidden tourists will drive through a lane of automobiles. Many members of the Iowa Auto club have agreed to have their cars in line on the avenue, and owners of autos all over the city are expected to be on hand to make the reception to the Gliddenites a momentous one. Officers of the Iowa Auto club went as far as Waukegan this morning and returned with the tourists. W. E. Moyer drove out today as far as Guthrie Center and planted flags designating the route into Des Moines. Several Des Moines cars accompanied the contestants in their trip across the state.

Stop at Savery.

The cars will not stop until the Savery hotel is reached. At the Savery a reception and smoker will be held for the tired and thirsty bunch.

For the night the cars will be sheltered at the old baseball grounds at Fourth and Chestnut streets. The grounds will be lighted with electricity and furnished with water. The police department will attend to the roping of the grounds and the guarding of the cars during the night.

Early tomorrow morning the Gliddenites will break night control for the day run to Davenport. The last night control will be had at Davenport and on Thursday, the last lap of the trip will be made. The cars will reach Chicago, the objective point, sometime Thursday afternoon, marking the completion of the longest and most severe tour ever attempted for the Glidden trophy.

OMAHA, Neb., June 28.—The Glidden tourists left here this morning for Des Moines, expecting to reach there about 4 o'clock this afternoon.

Two Parry cars were completely disqualified last evening following a committee meeting of the directors in charge of the tour. The Parry cars were the cause of the trouble at Kansas City. One car was in the competition race for the Glidden trophy and the other in the contest for the Chicago trophy.

The Register and Leader.

Des Moines, Iowa
July 17, 1910

IOWA SETS EXAMPLE IN ROAD BUILDING

Magazine Says State's High-
ways Pleasant Surprise
of Tour.

LIKED BY GLIDDENITES

They Were Much Pleased and Say
Other States Should Have
River-to-River Dragged
Roads.

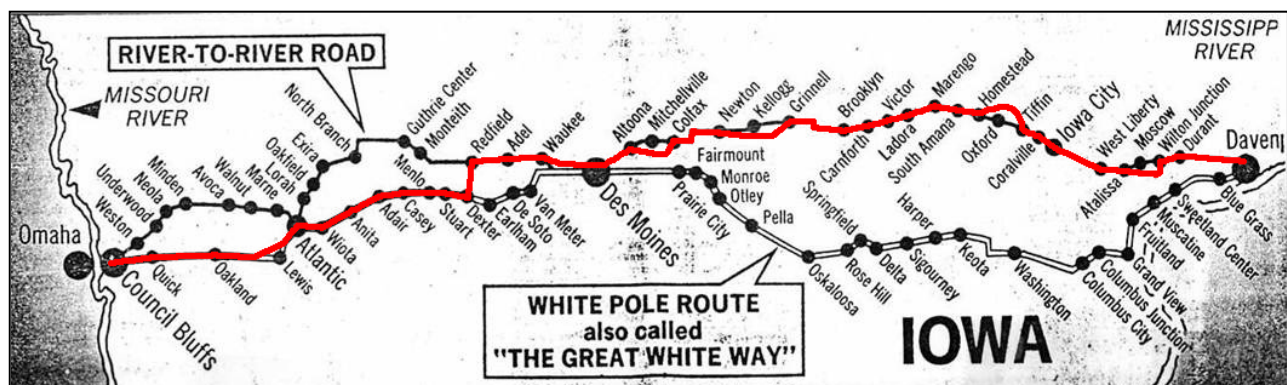
That Iowa has set an example to the entire country in road improvement by the work accomplished on the river-to-river dragged road is the statement made by one of the Glidden tourists in an article written for the Motor Age, which appears in this week's issue of that publication. The writer speaks of the river-to-river road as one of the most agreeable surprises on the Glidden tour. He pays a tribute to the progressiveness of the Iowa farmers and upholds the cross state highway as an example of what might be done in other states.

Accompanying the article are a number of pictures taken along the road while the tourists were in Iowa. The illustrations show long stretches of the road and the signs which have been placed by the road association across the state. He particularly commends the danger signals which have been placed at dangerous turns and crossings.

In part the article is as follows
Much has been said about the river-to-river road across Iowa and to all the Glidden tourists this road from Council Bluffs to Des Moines was one of the most agreeable surprises on the run. From Des Moines to Davenport it was not so good. This river-to-river road is 380 miles in length and extends from the Missouri river on the west of Iowa to the Mississippi river on the east. The road is an old road, having been in existence for years, but has received attention from the River-to-River Dragged Road association, which organization was formed to keep the road in suitable care. It is a dirt road from start to finish and after rains the King drag is used to level the surface. So perfect is the organization that the entire 380 miles can be dragged in three hours' time. This phenomenal work is only made possible by the organization, which is similar to that employed on a railroad.

This river-to-river road is one example of what might be done in other states in the union. What has been accomplished on the road counts for more than could be done at a dozen good roads conventions where the delegates listen to long talks on scientific road construction, expensive road maintenance, history of European highways, etc., etc. It seems to me that the originators of the river-to-river road scheme have hit upon the

one possible way of stimulating good roads movements, and that is by getting the farmers along the road to work. It is work that counts in the end. A century of talking may not produce as much results as one week of labor. We can only hold the interest of the people when we have those people act, and by act is meant to work such as the farmers along the river-to-river road do by dragging this road after a rain. It is a law of the human race that you can only hold the interest of the people in the proportion that you arouse their activities, and it will take years to arouse the activities by simply lecturing good roads and making the farmers receptacles into which the information is poured. Iowa has set an example to the entire country, first in the selection of a river-to-river highway across the state which undoubtedly will be selected by all tourists in the future; second, by the method of organizing for keeping the road in repair; and third by the erection of sign boards along the route showing where turns are to be made and warning signs at railroad crossings, steep hills and dangerous curves.



Links:

[River-to-River Road history](#)

[Historic Auto Trails](#)

[Early American Automobiles](#)

HALF-CENTURY EDITION
THE DAVENPORT DEMOCRAT
AND LEADER

July 25, 1910

**OUR GOOD ROADS
ATTRACT ATTENTION**

River-to-River Highway Is
Written Up in Har-
per's Weekly.



J. W. EICHINGER.

The River-to-River dragged road of Iowa, extending from Davenport to Council Bluffs, is fast gaining national recognition. It is the basis for an extended write-up in the last issue of Harper's Weekly. The article is profusely illustrated, containing a portrait of J. W. Eichinger, news editor of the Des Moines Capital, the originator of the "dragged road" movement in Iowa, also numerous illustrations of roads before and after being dragged, the appliances used for dragging and method of using. It also gives Davenport and Scott county prominent mention.

In telling how the movement was started and its progress, Mr. Eichinger relates the following of local interest:

Personal appeals went out to the livest men in each county. 'Call your automobilists, commercial clubs, business men, supervisors, and township

officers together. Pick a route, and send a map of it to the Capital,' was the request.

Jasper county came across. Poweshiek and Iowa followed. Johnson, where Iowa City with the State university is located, was slow. Appeals to the faculty, supervisors, and others were in vain. Finally a letter fell into the hands of Robert Carson. He replied: 'Write my brother, Frank C. Carson.'

A letter went to Frank Carson. Then things began to move. The map came. 'What shall I do next?' he asked. 'Go to the township officers,' we answered. 'Appeal to them to make road-dragging contracts with the farmers under the state law, which allows 50 cents a mile for every mile traveled in dragging the road. Where grading is needed, urge them to grade it up. Where drainage is needed, make them drain. If the township hasn't got enough money, appeal to the county supervisors to aid with county funds. If all these resources fail, take up a collection from business men, farmers, automobilists, and hire the work done yourself. Just get the work done. That's all there is to it.'

done. That's all there is to it.

N "Well, Carson did it. He went the limit. He even did some of the work himself with his own hands and money. The point is—he did it. Men like Carson were found in 11 of the 12 counties, but one. W. R. Weir, in Scott; C. M. Beem, in Iowa; B. F. Ricker, in Poweshiek; J. W. Foster, in Guthrie; Edwin Delahoyde, in Audubon; F. W. Porterfield, in Cass; and C. R. Hannan, in Pottawattamie. Every man did his duty. He got the road put in shape—graded, drained, and covered with dragging contracts. Muscatine people were slow to take hold. Carson and Weir said: 'Let us put the road through the north part of the county and we'll put in it shape.' They did. Soon Weir found it necessary to drop out. Dick R. Lane took his place, and the work went on.

"As the organization grew, the job became easier. Everybody worked in unison. As near as possible the same phases of the project were being worked out in every one of the 12 counties at the same time. Finally, when things were progressing well, the first scouting car over the 1910 Glidden tour route landed in Wichita, Kan. Little had been thought of the Glidden tour. Then the idea dawned—get this tour over the River-to-River dragged road.

The telegraph wires were hot within 5 minutes, instructing every county chairman: 'Write S. M. Butler, 437 Fifth avenue, New York, telling him about the River-to-River road. Invite him to route the Glidden tour over it.' From Des Moines I sent Butler a long wire telling of the 380-mile road building from Council Bluffs to Davenport, via Des Moines; asked him to route the tour over it, and promising the tourists the greatest demonstration they have ever received.

"A message was sent to Frank X. Zirbes, driver of the scouting car, asking him to use this road across Iowa.

This telegram was delivered to the writer by a motor-car 25 miles out of Lincoln, Neb., on the prairie, at 10:30 p. m. 'Many thanks for the invitation. We will be pleased to use the River-to-River dragged road,' came the reply.

"From one end of the line to the other pilot stations were organized in a single day. Every man knew his territory and waited the word. Zirbes drove the scouting car off the Omaha-Council Bluffs bridge and Charles R. Hannan, in a big red touring car, was waiting. Out through the Bluffs, Underwood, Minden, Neola to Avoca they went, where Dr. Porterfield, of Cass, picked them up. On rushed the scouting car, met by pilots, asked regarding pace, and brought into Des Moines, where the night was spent. An early start was made on Sunday morning, and when night fell the car was at Iowa City, the crew the guests of those two live wires, Frank and Robert Carson. At midnight, Sunday, Zirbes drove his car across the Davenport-Rock Island bridge, and the tired crew turned in.

HALF-CENTURY EDITION
THE DAVENPORT DEMOCRAT
AND LEADER

July 28, 1910

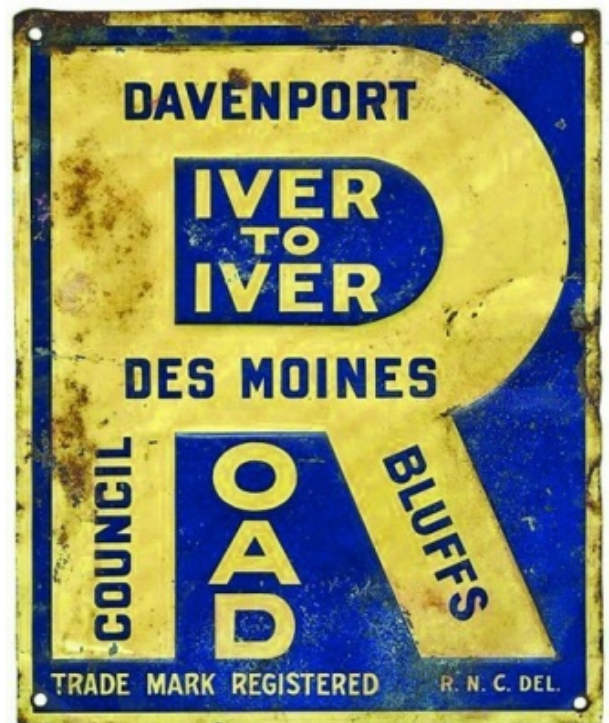
**SYMBOL FOR RIVER-TO-
RIVER ROAD SIGNS**



This unique symbol for a design for the use of the River-to-River Road association, was suggested to the secretary, J. W. Elchinger of Des Moines, by Robert M. Carson, chairman of the advertising committee of the Iowa City Commercial club.

It is suggested that officers and others interested in the River-to-River

road secure stencil of this sign enlarged to a height of about eight inches and use it as a road sign. The symbol is to appear in the road map of the River-to-River road association being issued by the Iowa Publishing Company of Davenport, and which is at present in the hands of the printer.





During a Glidden Tour

